

## Blackmore Plays The O2



By VennerRoad, 18<sup>th</sup> Jun 2017



Blackmore at the O2, June 17, 2017

It's difficult to credit that I first saw Ritchie Blackmore in the flesh more than half a lifetime ago, at Leeds, and twenty-four years ago with [Deep Purple](#) at Hammersmith. This series of concerts was about nostalgia. For once I wasn't the oldest man in the room, though granted it was an extremely big room. There were fans of my generation, the next generation, and quite a few kids; from the audience participation it was clear that like me, most of them had been literally raised on rock. Although the O2 was opened ten years ago, I had never visited it before, and didn't realise it was not simply a concert venue but a complex.

Huge venue meant huge staff and huge prices. After wisely opting for a hot drink in spite of the weather I decided £7.50 was too much to pay for a hot dog. When I arrived back at Sydenham I bought a fair sized complete takeaway meal from my local kebab shop for around the price of an O2 burger.

The Rainbow concert on June 17 featured the Sweet as the warm up act. Although they made their name as a glam rock band in the 70s when they were fed [a stream of hits](#) by the legendary team of Chinn & Chapman, they have a harder side, and this is what we saw here. They opened with *Action*, a group composition from 1975. Founder member Brian Connolly died in 1997 at the relatively young age of 51, and one song was dedicated to him. They also played what lead guitarist Andy Scott called the greatest song Chinn & Chapman ever wrote: *Six Teens*. Seat B 401 Q 473 is way up, but thankfully the

show wasn't a complete sell out, and for the main event I was able to move to a vacant seat considerably closer that gave me a much better view.

After the usual Rainbow preliminaries, the band began with *Spotlight Kid*, the second track from the 1981 *Difficult To Cure* album, an obvious show opener. Between this and the final encore number, (the equally obvious) *Smoke On The Water*, there followed a mix of songs from [Rainbow](#) and Deep Purple Mark II and III. Even before he left the latter to form Whitesnake, the scatological David Coverdale was already penning such puerile rubbish as *High Ball Shooter*, which thankfully was not performed here, but he did co-write two very fine ballads with Ritchie that were: *Mistreated* and the acoustic *Soldier Of Fortune*.

The latter has been performed on occasion by Blackmore's Night. Tonight along with another girl, [the alluring Candice](#) was filling in as a backing singer. I was rather hoping she would come forward and sing *Black Night* as a duet with vocalist Ronnie Romero, as in their 2004 performance at Bad Veldenstein when bass player Robert Curiano took the male lead, but it was not to be; the Golden Girl remained in the background and did not warrant even an introduction. *Black Night* was performed in regular Purple style. Another obvious duet was *Street Of Dreams* from the 1983 *Bent Out Of Shape* album; co-written with then vocalist Joe Lynn Turner, it was re-recorded as such for the 2006 album *The Village Lanterne* when Candice shared the vocal lead with Turner, but alas it was not meant to be. The problem is of course when there is so much material to choose from, you can't please everybody.

The surprise of the evening was a guest appearance by Russ Ballard on rhythm guitar. Although his name is not that well known outside of dedicated rock music circles, Ballard has written some classic songs including the enigmatic [Voices](#). He also wrote two of the band's hits: *I Surrender* and *Since You Been Gone*. The latter was performed here after *Mistreated* with Russ – a year younger than Blackmore at 71 – looking just as good.

Another desideratum was *Weiss Heim*. Along with the later *Son Of Alerik* this is unquestionably the finest instrumental Blackmore has written, but he didn't really showboat tonight. One of Blackmore's strengths is his willingness to allow band members to share the limelight, and it was Jens Johansson on keyboards who played the bulk of *Difficult To Cure*, which as dedicated fans will know includes the main theme from *Beethoven's Ninth*.

It remains to be seen if this will be the last the world sees of Rainbow. As well as Blackmore's Night, Ritchie has a family life: Candice and their two offspring; Autumn is now 7; Rory, 5. And Ritchie's other son, is fifty-three – seven years older than Candice!

That being said, the [late great Chuck Berry](#) was still creating music at ninety, and although in a sense all rock musicians live in his shadow, Ritchie Blackmore already has [an enormous legacy](#), but like Chuck and many others, music is in his blood, so don't be too surprised if 18 years from now he is still around and likewise creating great music.

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